

HAYCRAFT'S HISTORY OF ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY

BY

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Samuel Haycraft's "History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky," was first published in the Elizabethtown News in 1869 and republished in 1889-90. It was first published in book form in 1921 by the Woman's Club of Elizabethtown. A second edition was published in 1960 by the Hardin County Historical Society.



A SUPPLEMENT TO THE FIRST AND
SECOND EDITIONS.

Woman's Club

Elizabethtown, Kentucky

1904-1963



CLUB HOME

Brown - Pusey House

128 North Main Street

Organized 1904

KFWC 1905

General Federation 1915

The Month of December 1963, will mark the 40th year that the Woman's Club has maintained a permanent home in the Brown Pusey House.

A HISTORY OF ELIZABETHTOWN, KENTUCKY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

(written in 1869 by Samuel Haycraft)

Comments on the book with a section devoted to the Lincoln-Haycraft Correspondence of 1860.

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LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION



Few county seat towns in Kentucky have had more eventful beginnings than Elizabethtown, and no community's history has been so quaintly, but at the same time so amply, written. It was the pioneer historian, Samuel Haycraft, Jr., who gave the town this legacy. He envisioned a great future for the courthouse town and in 1869 (the year he wrote the history) he made the following statement: "For who can tell what Elizabethtown will be with her delightful and healthy location, with her enterprising and energetic population, her railroad facilities, her fine water, and her surrounding of intelligent and gentlemanly farmers, the best fruit country in the world, and her future manufactories that must spring up, and when it becomes a large city it will be well to look back upon her starting point."

Haycraft served as county and circuit court clerk from 1816 to 1857. His handwriting had appeared on so many legal papers that on May 28, 1860, presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln wrote Haycraft that "I do not think I ever saw you, though I very well know who you are—so well that I recognized your handwriting, on opening your letter, before I saw the signature." Lincoln continued, "My recollection is that Ben Helm was first clerk, that you succeeded him, that Jack Thomas and William Farleigh graduated in the same office, and that your handwritings were all very similar. Am I right?" Lincoln had probably seen many of the legal papers of his father's Hardin County transactions.

Lincoln and Haycraft, although they differed politically,

exchanged several letters, at least Lincoln wrote Haycraft five times during and immediately after the 1860 presidential campaign.

In 1921 the history (188 pages) made its first appearance in the book form when the Woman's Club of Elizabethtown sponsored the publication of 600 copies. However, it was the late Dr. William Allen Pusey of Chicago, Illinois, a former president of the American Medical Association, philanthropist and native of Elizabethtown, who underwrote the publishing venture.

In the make-up of the volume it was apparent that there was a need for a "Preliminary Note". This was prepared by Dr. Pusey as follows:

"Samuel Haycraft's 'History of Elizabethtown and Its Surroundings' was published in The Elizabethtown News in 1869 and republished in 1889-90. The preservation of this history through its publication in the News is a happy occurrence, for in no other way would much of the early history of the town have been accurately preserved.

"Mr. Haycraft was a son of one of the three pioneer settlers of the town, and was born when the town was still an early pioneer settlement. At the time of his death he had lived here 83 years, and he was the only remaining citizen whose life went back to the town's earliest days. Elizabethtown is now 140 years old, and it will not be long before no one will be left whose interest in the town's history is quickened by personal memory of its early inhabitants. When that time comes, traditions will rapidly grow vague, and the knowledge of its early history and characters will be lost. On account of facts like these the Elizabethtown Woman's Club undertook the publication of Haycraft's History in book form. The original suggestion of this came from Mrs. William Allen Pusey, of Chicago. There are many Elizabethtown people both at home and abroad to whom the town is dear and who are interested in preserving its history. When this matter was proposed to them there was a gratifying response which has enabled the club to proceed with the undertaking.

"Quite aside from local interest and personal feelings there are other good reasons for the publication of this work. It is an exceedingly interesting document, particularly in the vivid description which the writer gives of pioneer customs and conditions. The author loved the town and its early history, and he describes it in vigorous style and with a quaint sense of humor. He was little disturbed in his writing by the laws of composition, but his descriptions flow on easily, and the reader is never uncertain as to what he is trying to say. The original copy has

been reproduced without any effort at alteration or correction. A few chapters, composed of material not really a part of the history of the town and its surroundings, have been omitted.

"The history ends abruptly with a short sketch of Ben Hardin which it was evidently intended to continue. It is to be hoped that the example of this history will stimulate some later public spirited citizen to continue the history of the town down to the present day.

"For the privilege of publishing this history the Woman's Club is indebted to Mr. H. A. Sommers and the other owners of The Elizabethtown News and takes pleasure in expressing here its obligations to them."

The "Preliminary Note", however, was signed by the following committee of the Woman's Club of Elizabethtown, Kentucky: Miss Lillie Goldnamer, Miss Emily Payne, Miss Margaret Stewart, Mrs. W. H. Robertson, Mrs. J. R. Selby, Mrs. R. W. Cates, and Mrs. R. B. Park.

The history met with immediate acceptance, the 600 volumes selling for \$1.50 per copy. Unfortunately, there was no index. Dr. Pusey sensing the need for an index if a second edition was to ever be published had one made at his own expense and placed it in the keeping of the Kentucky State Historical Society at Frankfort, Kentucky.

Once historians and librarians had a chance to read Haycraft's Elizabethtown history they realized that its value was of far more than local interest. Here was a volume that gave intimate glimpses into the lives of the Lincolns, the Buchanans, the Audubons, the Helms, the Greens, the Duvalls, the Edwards, the Hodgens, the Bushs, the La Rues, the Van Meters and the Wintersmiths—most of whom played prominent roles as contemporaries of Thomas Lincoln or the Sixteenth President.

From a Lincoln historian's point of view some of the most intriguing statements to be found in Haycraft's history relate to Thomas Lincoln's home in Elizabethtown. A case in point is to be found on page 62. Haycraft in relating a grand jury indictment of Barbara Vance (September Term 1812) for retailing spirituous liquors without license, stated that Barbara kept a doggerly in the present Jones house above the Eagle House, the only log house now standing of that ancient date, **except the old cabin that the father of President Lincoln lived in.**

Apparently Haycraft had a high regard for Thomas Lincoln's skill as a carpenter. In discussing the home of Hardin Thomas the historian noted that the house was "rather better than usual

for that day, the carpenter's work of which was executed by Thomas Lincoln, the father of the late President . . ."

It is the regret of all readers that Haycraft did not pin-point the location of the Thomas Lincoln cabin home in his history as to lot number, street, precise location, etc. so that all might visit the site of that Elizabethtown home, where Abraham Lincoln's unborn life began. This is all the more regrettable because the Sixteenth President is today declared to be the greatest, grandest figure of history since the Christian era.

Copies of Haycraft's history were soon exhausted. Used copies occasionally appeared on the second-hand book market for \$20 or \$25. The larger libraries throughout the country vied with each other when a copy was offered for sale. Perhaps no small town history ever enjoyed so wide an acceptance.

Eventually most copies found their way into institutional collections except for the few volumes owned by local residents. A demand for a second edition was met in 1960 when the Hardin County Historical Society published 500 copies to be sold at \$6.50 a copy, postpaid.

While the second edition (264 pages) did not carry the Woman's Club's "Preliminary Note" or make any mention of the first edition, it did incorporate within its covers the index and some miscellaneous chapters by Haycraft which did not find their way into the earlier printing. Like the first edition this reprinted version has found a ready acceptance.

Haycraft's history has proved a valuable asset to Elizabethtown and from this nucleus there has emerged an historical sentiment that has found expression through the Woman's Club of Elizabethtown, the Hardin County Historical Society and various other local organizations that treasure our history and have a reverence for the past.

LINCOLN-HAYCRAFT CORRESPONDENCE

As both the first and second editions of Haycraft's "History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky" incorporate into the text Abraham Lincoln's third letter to Samuel Haycraft (page 10) it is thought well to publish the remaining four letters. Unfortunately, a careful reading of the History's version of the third letter of August 16, 1860, indicates that it has not been accurately copied from the original. A correct version is found in this compilation

Springfield, Ills.
May 28, 1860

Hon. Saml. Haycraft

Dear Sir:

Your recent letter, without date, is received. Also the copy

of your speech on the contemplated Daniel Boone monument, which I have not yet had time to read. In the main you are right about my history. My father was Thomas Lincoln, and Mrs. Sally Johnston, was his second wife. You are mistaken about my mother—her maiden name was Nancy Hanks. I was not born at Elizabethtown; but my mother's first child, a daughter, two years older than myself, and now long since deceased, was. I was born Feb. 12, 1809, near where Hogginsville (Hodgenville) now is, then in Hardin county. I do not think I ever saw you, though I very well know who you are—so well that I recognized your handwriting, on opening your letter, before I saw the signature. My recollection is that Ben. Helm was first Clerk, that you succeeded him, that Jack Thomas and William Farleigh graduated in the same office, and that your handwritings were all very similar. Am I right?

My father has been dead near ten years; but my step-mother. (Mrs. Johnson) is still living.

I am really very glad of your letter, and shall be pleased to receive another at any time. Yours very truly A. Lincoln

Autograph letter (photostat) signed. The Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois. The Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress, Microfilm No. 43403 (with envelope).

PRIVATE

Hon. Saml. Haycraft Springfield, Ills. June 4, 1860

Dear Sir: Your second letter, dated May 31st. is received. You suggest that a visit to the place of my nativity might be pleasant to me. Indeed it would. But would it be safe? Would not the people Lynch me?

The place on Knob Creek, mentioned by Mr. Read, I remember well; but I was not born there. As my parents have told me, I was born on Nolin, very much nearer Hodgin's-Mill than the Knob Creek place is. My earliest recollection, however, is of the Knob Creek place.

Like yourself I belonged to the whig party from it's origin to it's close. I never belonged to the American party organization; nor ever to a party called a Union party; though I hope I neither am, or ever have been, less devoted to the Union than yourself, or any other patriotic man.

It may not be altogether without interest to let you know that my wife is a daughter of the late Robert S. Todd, of Lexington Ky—and that a half sister of hers is the wife of Ben. Hardin Helm, born and raised at your town, but residing

at Louisville now, as I believe. Yours very truly A. Lincoln
Autographed letter signed Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino,
California.

Hon. Saml. Haycraft Springfield, Ills. Aug. 16, 1860

My dear Sir: A correspondent of the New-York Herald, who was here a week ago, writing to that paper, represents me as saying I had been invited to visit Kentucky, but that I suspected it was a trap to inveigle me into Kentucky, in order to do violence to me.

This is wholly a mistake. I said no such thing. I do not remember, but possibly I did mention my correspondence with you. But very certainly I was not guilty of stating, or insinuating, a suspicion of any intended violence, deception, or other wrong, against me, by you, or any other Kentuckian. Thinking this Herald correspondence might fall under your eye. I think it due to myself to enter my protest against the correctness of this part of it. I scarcely think the correspondent was malicious; but rather that he misunderstood what was said. Yours very truly

A. Lincoln

Autographed letter signed, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Hon. Sam Haycraft (Springfield, Ill
My dear S) Aug 23 1860)

Yours of the 19th. is just received. I now fear I may have given you some uneasiness by my last letter. I did not mean to intimate that I had, to any extent, been involved, or embarrassed, by you; nor yet, to draw from you anything to relieve myself from difficulty. My only object was to assure you that I had not, as represented by the Herald correspondent, charged you with an attempt to inveigle me into Kentucky to do me violence. I do believe no such thing of you, or of Kentuckians generally; and I dislike to be represented to them as slandering them in that way. (Yours truly

A. Lincoln)

Autographed letter (mutilated) Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Private and Confidential

Hon. Samuel Haycraft Springfield, Ills. Nov. 13, 1860

My dear Sir. Yours of the 9th. is just received. I can only answer briefly. Rest fully assured that the good people of the South who will put themselves in the same temper and mood towards me which you do, will find no cause to complain of me.

While I can not, as yet, make any committal as to offices.

I sincerely hope I may find it in my power to oblige the friends of Mr. Wintersmith. (Yours very truly, A. Lincoln)

Autographed letter (mutilated) Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Apparently Haycraft wrote Lincoln six different letters, the first two of which are not extant. In Lincoln's May 28, 1860 letter to Haycraft he mentioned "Your recent letter, without date", and in his June 4, 1860 letter Lincoln acknowledged "your second letter dated, May 31st". The earliest letter from Haycraft, that is extant, is dated August 19, 1860. Other Haycraft letters addressed to Lincoln are dated August 26, 1860, November 9, 1860 and November 13, 1860. The four original letters that are extant constitute a part of The Abraham Lincoln Papers of the Library of Congress. These letters never before published have the following (micro-film) Catalogue Numbers:

August 19, 1860 — # 3567

October 26, 1860 — # 4148

November 9, 1860 — # 4391 (with envelope)

November 13, 1860 — # 4477 (with envelope)

As Haycraft was an uncommonly poor scribe it has been difficult to decipher parts of his scrawl. Such words as have defied translation are indicated by three periods enclosed in parentheses. Fortunately, this has occurred in only a few sentences.

Elizabeth Town Ky
August 19 1860

Hon Abraham Lincoln

My dear Sir

Your letter of 16 Inst was received by this days mail. And I hasten to reply. Not only to acquit you but to clear myself of any knowledge of that statement of some correspondent from the N. Y. Herald saying that you had been invited to visit Ky. but that you suspected it was a trap to inveigle you into Ky. in order to do violence to you."

I will tax your patience by adding to our correspondence. It was generally understood that you were born in this Town (Elizabeth Town) as there was some difference of opinion about this place & also about your parentage, that I took the liberty of writing to you on the subject, to which you frankly & promptly responded.

That letter called out another from me, in which I did not invite you to visit Kentucky, but in speaking of this place of your birth & of your recollections of this old Home Stead, I

made a passing suggestion that it might be pleasant for you now in the turn of life to visit the scenes of your nativity. To which in your letter marked **Private** dated June 4th you in this playful language "You suggest that a visit to the place of my nativity would be pleasant to me—Indeed it would—But would it be safe? Would not the people lynch me? The place on Knob Creek mentioned by Mr. Read I remember very well, but I was not born there."

"As my parents have told me, I was born on Nolin very much nearer Hodgins-Mill than the Knob Creek place is. My earliest recollection however is of the Knob Creek place."

The remark about the lynching. No man of sense would have understood it in any other way than a (. . .) playfulness and pleasantry on your part. I at least so understood it, and was about to reply to it in the same humor, that a visit here would subject you to a good many attacks — But they would (. . .) for office under you, as it was regarded as a foregone conclusion that you would be the next President unless the split in the Democratic party lets in Bell. The mark **Private** on your letter I supposed simply meant that it was not for publication. Had it been marked Confidential nobody would have seen it. But as it was I showed it to Mr. W. B. Read who was attending our Court and one or two other acquaintances and spoke of it to others who like myself had a curiosity about your birthplace. The reason why I did not reply was through a little delicacy, least my object might be misconstrued.

I suppose you have noticed the votes of the Clerk of the Court of Appeals in which the Bell Candidate beat the Breckenridge man upward of 25,000 votes. That Breckenridge is in a minority in Ky. I have no kind of doubt, but I do not deem the late election a fair test as a great many Douglas men voted for Country. But I have no doubt that if the parties stand as they now are in Nov. next that Bell & Everett will carry the State of Ky. by a considerable plurality of votes.

An old neighbor and friend of mine Sam'l Young, told me to say to you if I wrote to you again that he would vote for you. His sister married a Hanks, and he married a sister of my old Friend Charles Sawyer who lives near Mattoon and who tho near 80 years of age headed a Lincoln torch light procession at that place not long since and carried a fence rail on his shoulder as did every other man in the procession. Not long since a relation of mine from New York visited this place and aided by some old Citizens hunted up the remains of the Old Cabin in which your father resided. He had 8 feet of a log

sawed out and took it to New York. The old house had been removed several times, was once a human residence, another a Slaughter house, and now a Stable. — excuse me for going into these little particulars. I thought you would not be displeased to hear of them. I have seen in the illustrated papers a likeness of yourself. I was almost on the point of saying that if you had a correct photograph of yourself that I would like to see it.

I do not suppose that you intend to visit Ky. But if you do I would like to see you personally and would be sure that you would be pleasantly received. I wish it understood that this letter is private and not for publication, but if you desire a reply from me to the N. Y. Herald I will with pleasure prepare a statement.

Truly yours
Saml Haycraft

Elizabeth Town Ky.
Oct 26, 1860

Hon. Abraham Lincoln,

My dear Sir,

Not long since I saw my old friend Dick Wintersmith who informed me that he in company with Ben Hardin Helm had lately paid you a visit and taken tea at your house. Dick was our late Treasurer and is a fellow of rare wit and humour and told me that he had expressed his fears to your lady that if it was known in the South that he had supped at your house that he would be hung. I told Dick that I had some fears myself that if you were elected that it would be the cause of my death — How so? says Dick. I replied that Lincoln would give an appointment (.) Swampy County (. . .) the Indians and that the consequences would be fatal.

I have a great anxiety to know how a man feels in your present position a candidate for the highest office one of the gifts of a mighty nation and in less than two weeks of the time.

I have myself in days past had some anxiety about some petty office. But (. . .) in your case is a deep one.

In Kentucky, tho a slave state, we occupy a middle ground — and generally we are as much opposed to the fire eating disunion gang as we are to the ultra abolitionists of the North.

From later indications we look upon your election as a fixed fact, a foregone conclusion. — Bell will certainly carry Kentucky and Tennessee as I once before remarked to you.

Old Uncle Sammy Young requested me if ever I wrote to you again to be certain to send you his respects — he will vote for you if he lives — one of our townsmen Robert L. Wintersmith is the Lincoln Elector for this District and takes decided ground

— and regrets that he is not an orator that he might canvas the state for you.

Mr. James L. Hill the son of one of the (. . .) Women in (. . .) sends you his respects. His mother's maiden name was Lucy Lincoln a daughter of Annanai Lincoln who she says was a brother of your father.

James L. Hill, or as we call him Whalan Hill, is an industrious, enterprising cabinet maker with a tolerably fair education. I make these suggestions to you supposing that they might inform or answer you to a limited extent. But as no doubt your correspondants are now numerous I must apologize for this letter on light matters, as intruding upon your time. With the highest respects,

Your Obt. St.
Sam Haycraft

Elizabeth Town Hardin Co Ky

November 9, 1860

Hon. A Lincoln,

Dear Sir,

Now that the Battle is ended and the smoke thereof is being blown away and that you are now beyond doubt President elect of these glorious United States, as I predicted six months ago, I feel inclined though an humble individual unknown to fame to address you a few lines for which I hope you will pardon me, a great weight of responsibility has now fallen on your shoulders, and the guidance of the Ship of State committed to your hand.

I pray God that you may be enabled manfully to bear up under that weight and skillfully to pilot the vessel through the breakers of the threatened storm, that you will in all the honesty of your heart do so I have an abiding confidence, and that our Southern fire eaters will find (if they give you time to show your hand) that you are a conservative chief of the Nation in a national point of view that is the President of the **United States** and not a sectional ruler. Altho Kentucky gave you but a small vote, you will find her clinging on to the union, and honestly aiding you in the very arduous duties that lie before you. It will no doubt require all your wisdom and skill to conduct the Ship of State through the breakers, and it should be the duty, and I hope will be the pleasure of all good and true men to stand by you in the Conflict. And I hope that all may be well and the unity of the States preserved. This Hot Spring of the

South will no doubt try a while to kick up a dust but sober second thought calms them down into decent acquiescence to the choice of the Nation. I do not profess to have the wisdom or the ability to suggest a course of policy. But your prudence and that proper decent respect which you have during the Canvass shown to the dignity of the office to which the people have elevated you without your compromising the respect for the opinions of an enlightened Nation — Stumping the States and harranging the people for an office of the highest dignity — will lead you to a course (. . .) and conservative in your administration— is the ground work of my hope for the future. These remarks are timidly made and I hope you will not think me presumptuous or obtrusive in making them. If an outsider may be allowed the privilege, I would name one man in a small way deserving of your patronage, and I make the suggestion without his knowledge or (. . .). I mean our fellow citizen (of this Town) Mr. Robert L. Wintersmith who was one on your electoral ticket. He stood almost alone and advocated your claim. And I have heard but one sentiment among the people and that is that he ought to be remembered while favors are being dispensed. He has labored through adverse fortune with a large family and is poor, but as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar.

I expect you will be annoyed to decide with letters and all sorts of petitions and communications from your own supporters, and I can hardly expect any reply to this communication. indeed it may be considered impertinent under all circumstances; but it is not so intended, and is made in the honesty of my heart. It is true that I would like to hear from you if your leisure permits.

Very Respectfully Yours,
Saml Haycraft

Elizabeth Town Ky
Nov 13, 1860

(Private)

Hon. Abraham Lincoln,

Not withstanding my late communication excuse me for troubling you so soon again. My apology will be found in my great desire that you should be disabused before the South and in the Slave States and thereby afford you a smoother sea than the present ebullitions of the South seem to portend. I am satisfied that a very large majority of Kentuckians are (. . .) to your election from the fact that they believe firmly that your administration will be honest, just and conservative. If you read the Louisville Journal you will see a decided tendency in

that way, and that paper gives tongue to a very large portion of our people. But to come to the point — It has been intimated to me (knowing that I had been in correspondence with you) that it might serve the public and be promotive of some good for you to pay a visit to Kentucky at this point, being the County of your nativity and make a public address — and it was suggested to me to draw up a call upon you to be signed by all our old citizens giving you a public invitation. But I answered that it would be proper for me first to address you privately on the subject and learn from you confidentially whether such a demonstration would be agreeable to you to meet your notion of propriety. My own opinion is that there would be no impropriety in it as the election is over, and you could have no private ends to answer, and coupled with the fact that before the election you maintained that (. . .) silence which became a candidate for so high a position. I want Ky to speak out in such decisive language of the importance of adhering to the union and Constitution as would leave no doubt about her position and give no hope to the South that she would in the slightest degree encourage the madmen of that Section to look to her for aid, comfort or help in their hairbrained attempt to dissolve the union. I conversed with Governor Helm today on this subject. He highly approves of the plans to get your answer by a visit or such a reply to an invitation as would have a tendency to allay the troubled elements. But as some of his friends about Frankfort and Louisville have spoken of him as likely to obtain some executive favors, in which he has had no (. . .) or expectations in that way will induce him as a modest and high toned gentleman to take no active hand in the arrangements. This I say confidentially — I am confident that a visit from you once arranged would bring a tremendous crowd who would meet you openhanded, and listen to you with pleasure. If you can answer personally please let me hear from you.

Yours truly
Saml Haycraft

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